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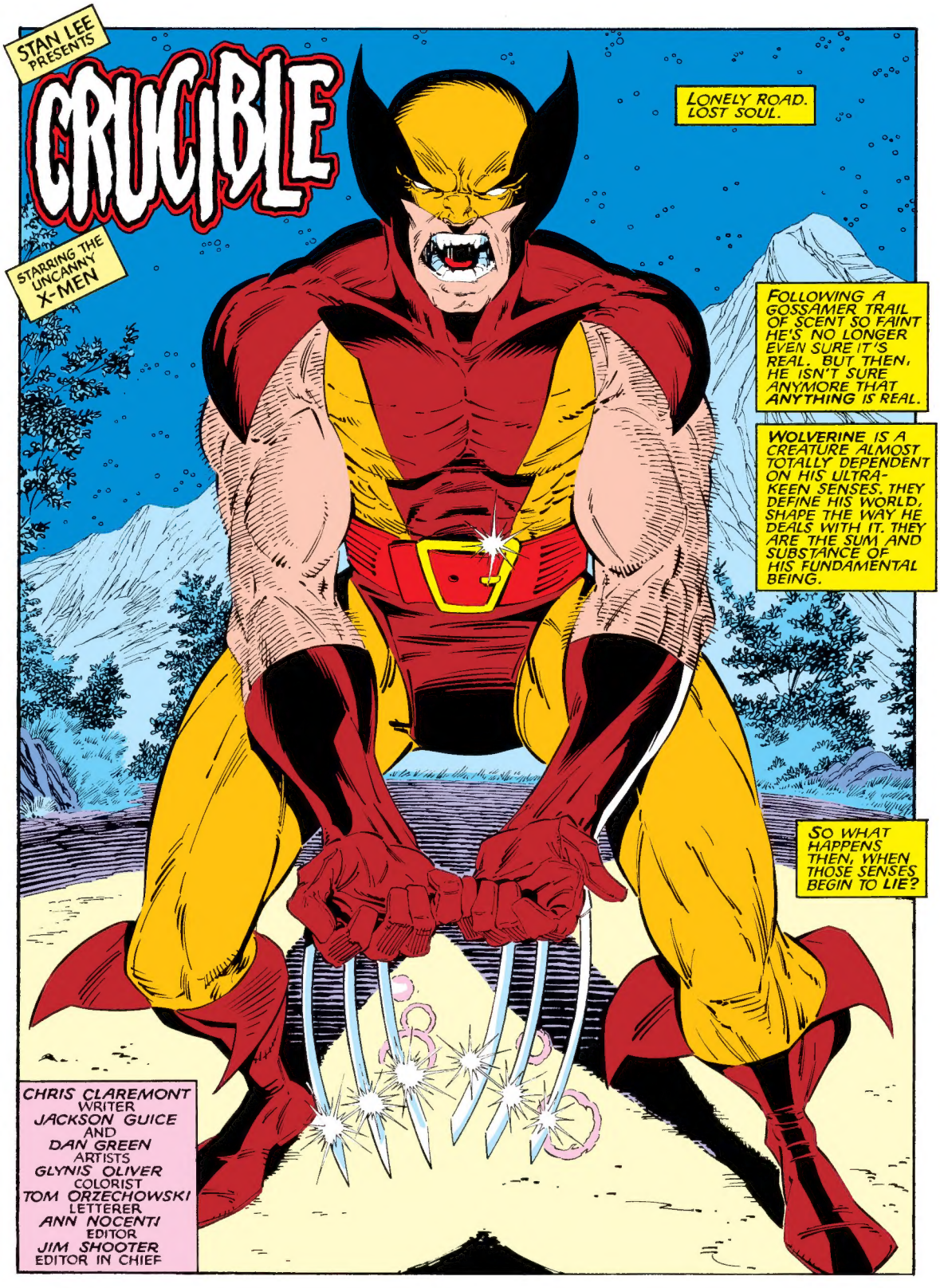

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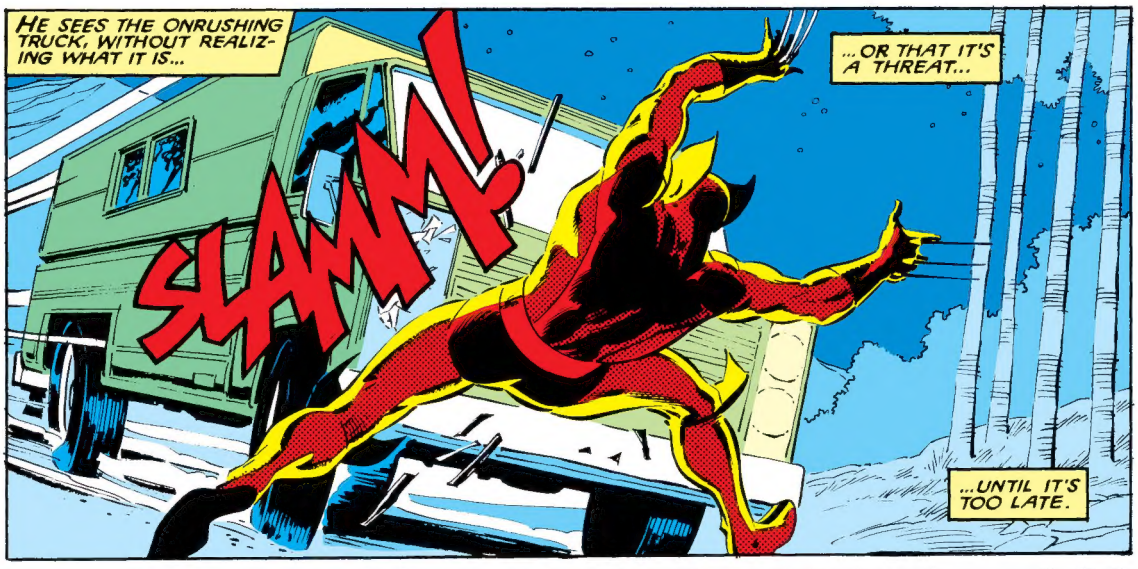
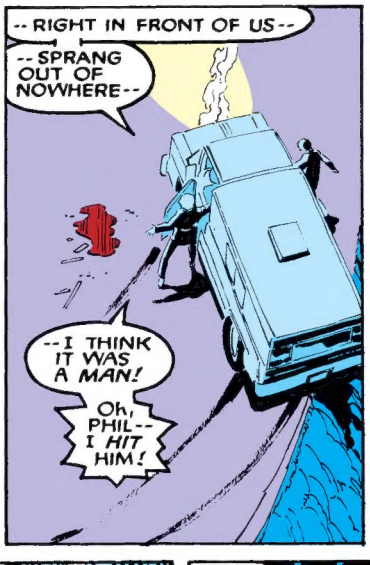
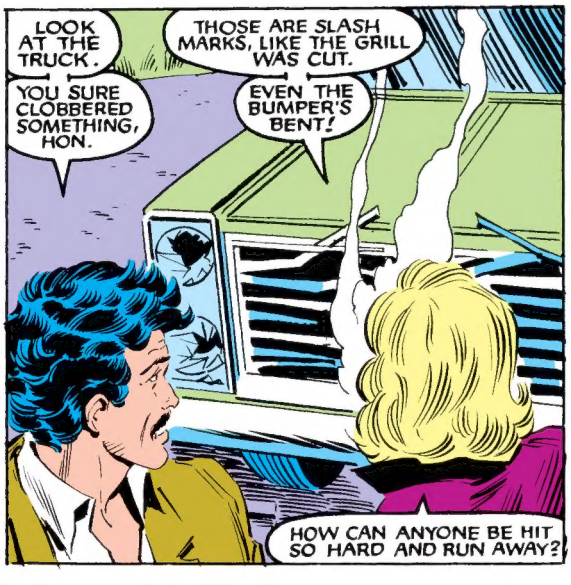

HE SEES THE ONRUSHING TRUCK, WITHOUT REALIZING WHAT IT IS...
SLAMM!
...OR THAT IT'S A THREAT...
...UNTIL IT'S TOO LATE.

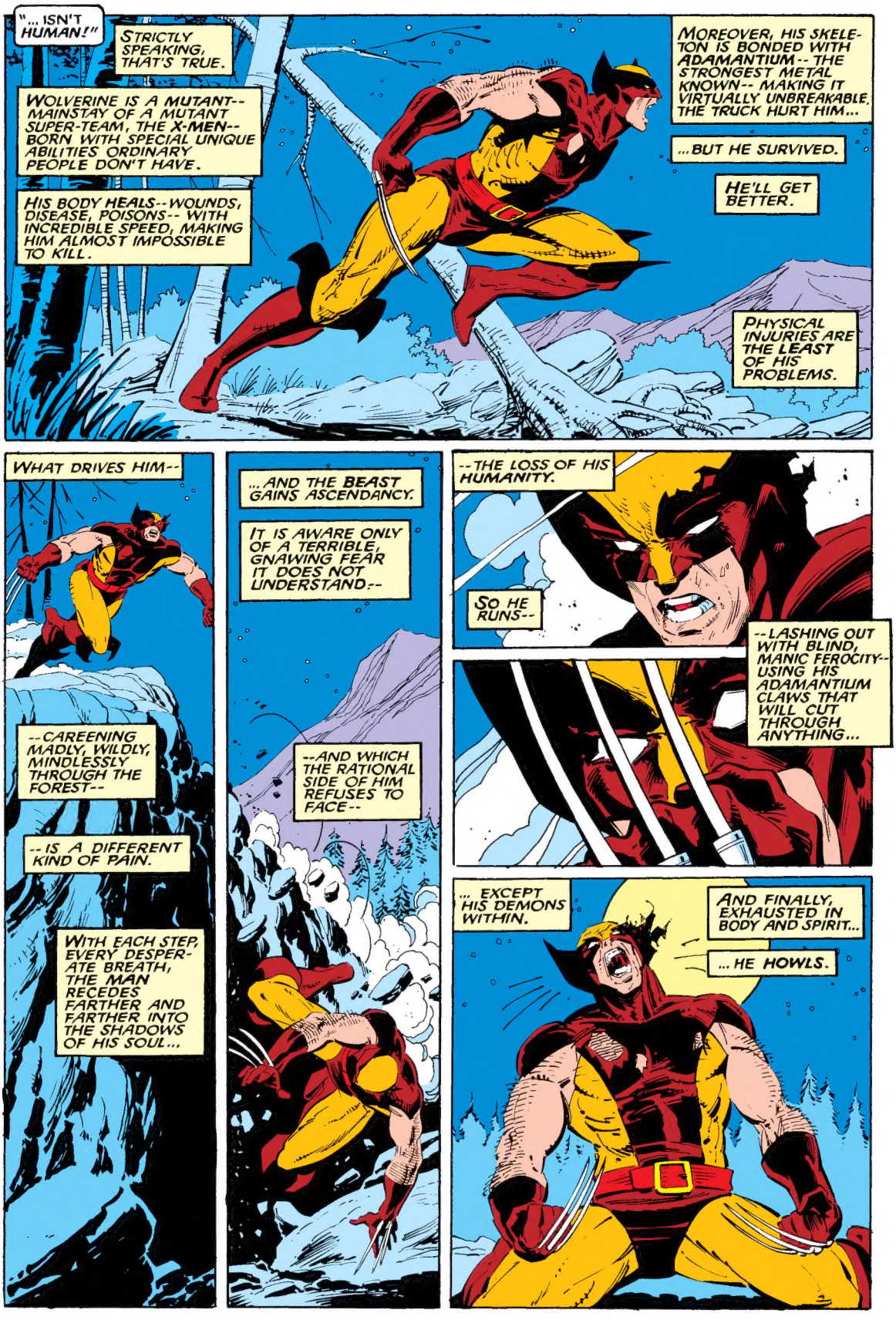
WHAT THE HECK--?!?
MARCIE!?!
I DON'T KNOW I DON'T KNOW!
OHMYLORD-- PHIL-- SOMETHING IN THE ROAD--

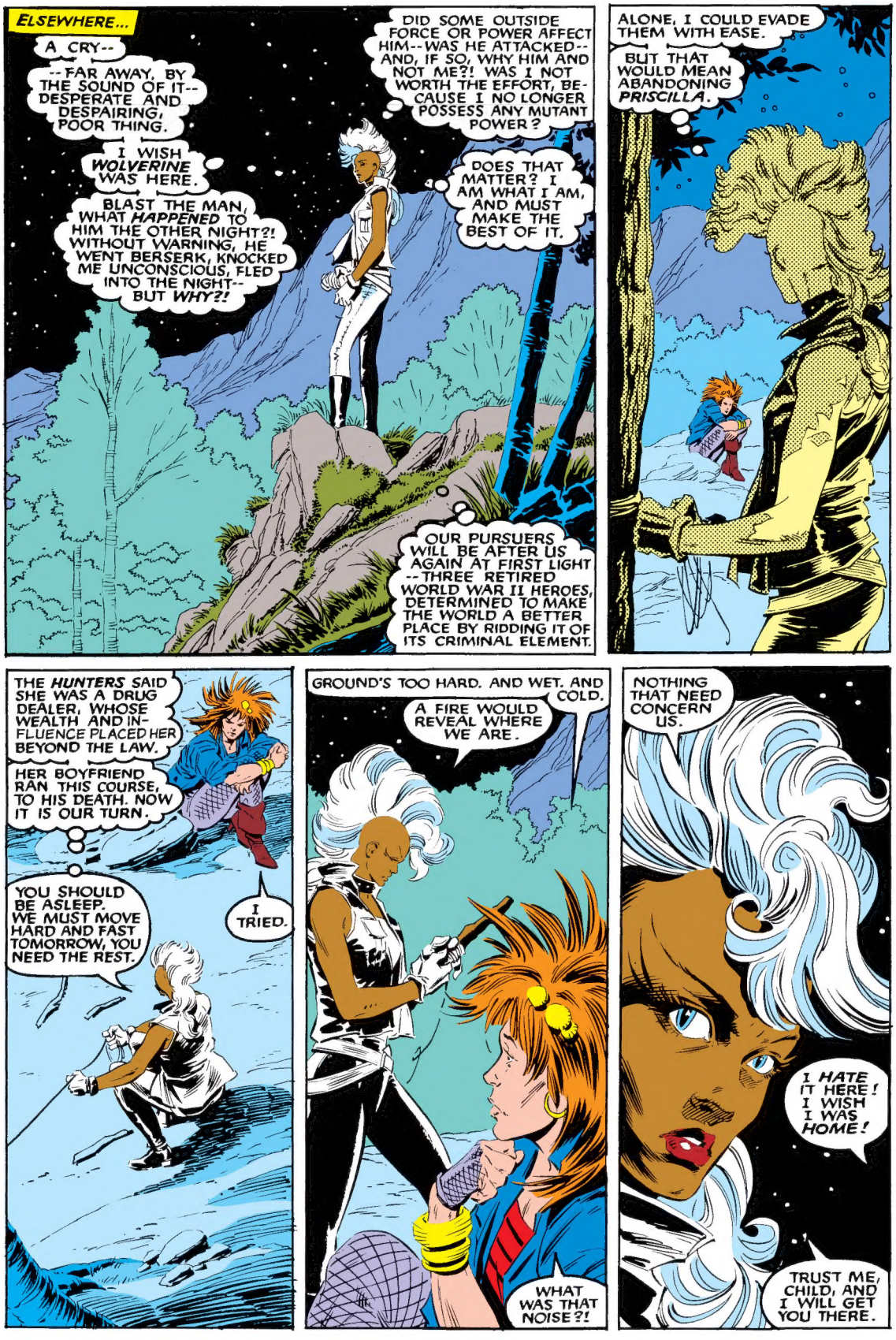

-- RIGHT IN FRONT OF US--
-- SPRANG OUT OF NOWHERE--
--I THINK IT WAS A MAN!
Oh, PHIL-- I HIT HIM!

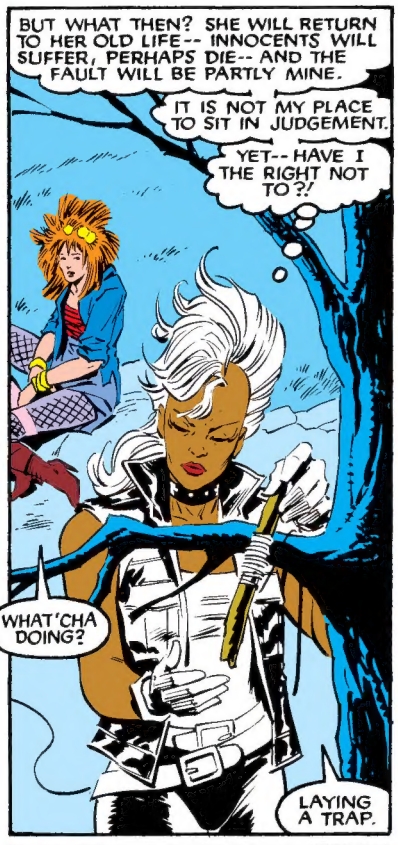
NO SIGN OF ANYBODY.
PHIL-- DID I IMAGINE IT?!
ROAD'S CLEAN AS CAN BE.


LOOK AT THE TRUCK.
THOSE ARE SLASH MARKS, LIKE THE GRILL WAS CUT.
YOU SURE CLOBBERED SOMETHING, HON.
EVEN THE BUMPER'S BENT!
HOW CAN ANYONE BE HIT SO HARD AND RUN AWAY?

BEATS ME.
WE HAVE TO FIND HIM, PHIL, GET HIM TO A HOSPITAL!
IT'S DARK, MARCIE-- AND WE'RE GOIN' NOWHERE TILL WE FIX THE TRUCK-- HOLY COW!
HRRRARRRRRR
W-WAS THAT WHAT WE HIT--?!
I SURE HOPE NOT. 'CAUSE WHATEVER MADE THAT SOUND...


"... ISN'T HUMAN!"
STRICTLY SPEAKING, THAT'S TRUE.
WOLVERINE IS A MUTANT-- MAINSTAY OF A MUTANT SUPER-TEAM, THE X-MEN-- BORN WITH SPECIAL UNIQUE ABILITIES ORDINARY PEOPLE DON'T HAVE.
HIS BODY HEALS--WOUNDS, DISEASE, POISONS-- WITH INCREDIBLE SPEED, MAKING HIM ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE TO KILL.
MOREOVER, HIS SKELETON IS BONDED WITH ADAMANTIUM-- THE STRONGEST METAL KNOWN-- MAKING IT VIRTUALLY UNBREAKABLE. THE TRUCK HURT HIM...
...BUT HE SURVIVED.
HE'LL GET BETTER.
PHYSICAL INJURIES ARE THE LEAST OF HIS PROBLEMS.
WHAT DRIVES HIM--
--CAREENING MADLY, WILDLY, MINDLESSLY THROUGH THE FOREST--
--IS A DIFFERENT KIND OF PAIN.
WITH EACH STEP, EVERY DESPERATE BREATH, THE MAN RECEDES FARTHER AND FARTHER INTO THE SHADOWS OF HIS SOUL...
...AND THE BEAST GAINS ASCENDANCY.
IT IS AWARE ONLY OF A TERRIBLE, GNAWING FEAR IT DOES NOT UNDERSTAND:--
--AND WHICH THE RATIONAL SIDE OF HIM REFUSES TO FACE--
--THE LOSS OF HIS HUMANITY.
SO HE RUNS--
--LASHING OUT WITH BLIND, MANIC FEROCITY-- USING HIS ADAMANTIUM CLAWS THAT WILL CUT THROUGH ANYTHING...
... EXCEPT HIS DEMONS WITHIN.
AND FINALLY, EXHAUSTED IN BODY AND SPIRIT...
... HE HOWLS.

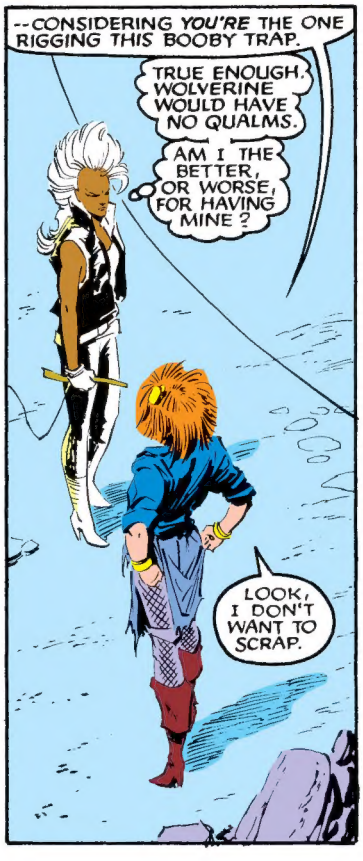

ELSEWHERE...
A CRY--
--FAR AWAY, BY THE SOUND OF IT--DESPERATE AND DESPAIRING, POOR THING.
I WISH WOLVERINE WAS HERE.
BLAST THE MAN, WHAT HAPPENED TO HIM THE OTHER NIGHT?! WITHOUT WARNING, HE WENT BERSERK, KNOCKED ME UNCONSCIOUS, FLED INTO THE NIGHT--BUT WHY?!
DID SOME OUTSIDE FORCE OR POWER AFFECT HIM--WAS HE ATTACKED--AND, IF SO, WHY HIM AND NOT ME?! WAS I NOT WORTH THE EFFORT, BECAUSE I NO LONGER POSSESS ANY MUTANT POWER?
DOES THAT MATTER? I AM WHAT I AM, AND MUST MAKE THE BEST OF IT.
OUR PURSUERS WILL BE AFTER US AGAIN AT FIRST LIGHT --THREE RETIRED WORLD WAR II HEROES, DETERMINED TO MAKE THE WORLD A BETTER PLACE BY RIDDING IT OF ITS CRIMINAL ELEMENT.
ALONE, I COULD EVADE THEM WITH EASE.
BUT THAT WOULD MEAN ABANDONING PRISCILLA.
THE HUNTERS SAID SHE WAS A DRUG DEALER, WHOSE WEALTH AND INFLUENCE PLACED HER BEYOND THE LAW.
HER BOYFRIEND RAN THIS COURSE, TO HIS DEATH. NOW IT IS OUR TURN.
YOU SHOULD BE ASLEEP. WE MUST MOVE HARD AND FAST TOMORROW, YOU NEED THE REST.
I TRIED.
GROUND'S TOO HARD. AND WET. AND COLD.
A FIRE WOULD REVEAL WHERE WE ARE.
WHAT WAS THAT NOISE?!
NOTHING THAT NEED CONCERN US.
I HATE IT HERE! I WISH I WAS HOME!
TRUST ME, CHILD, AND I WILL GET YOU THERE.


BUT WHAT THEN? SHE WILL RETURN TO HER OLD LIFE-- INNOCENTS WILL SUFFER, PERHAPS DIE-- AND THE FAULT WILL BE PARTLY MINE.
IT IS NOT MY PLACE TO SIT IN JUDGEMENT.
YET-- HAVE I THE RIGHT NOT TO?!
WHAT'CHA DOING?
LAYING A TRAP.

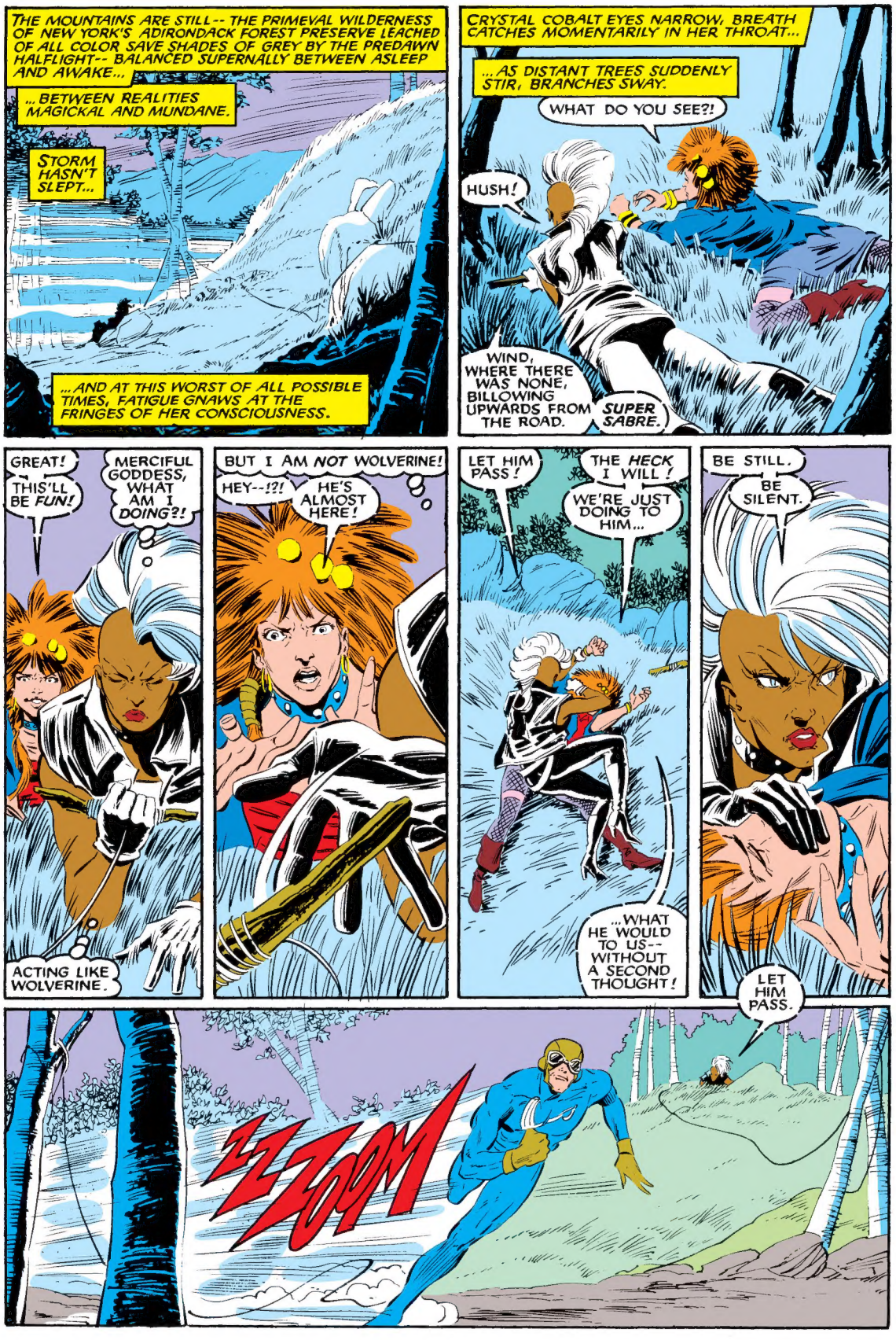
LOGICALLY, THE SPEEDSTER CALLED SUPER SABRE WILL BE THE FIRST ONE ALONG. THIS FISHING LINE I FOUND SHOULD DEAL WITH HIM.
OUTTASIGHT! YOU'LL TAKE HIS HEAD CLEAN OFF!
MY KIND'A STYLE, STORM! I LIKE IT!

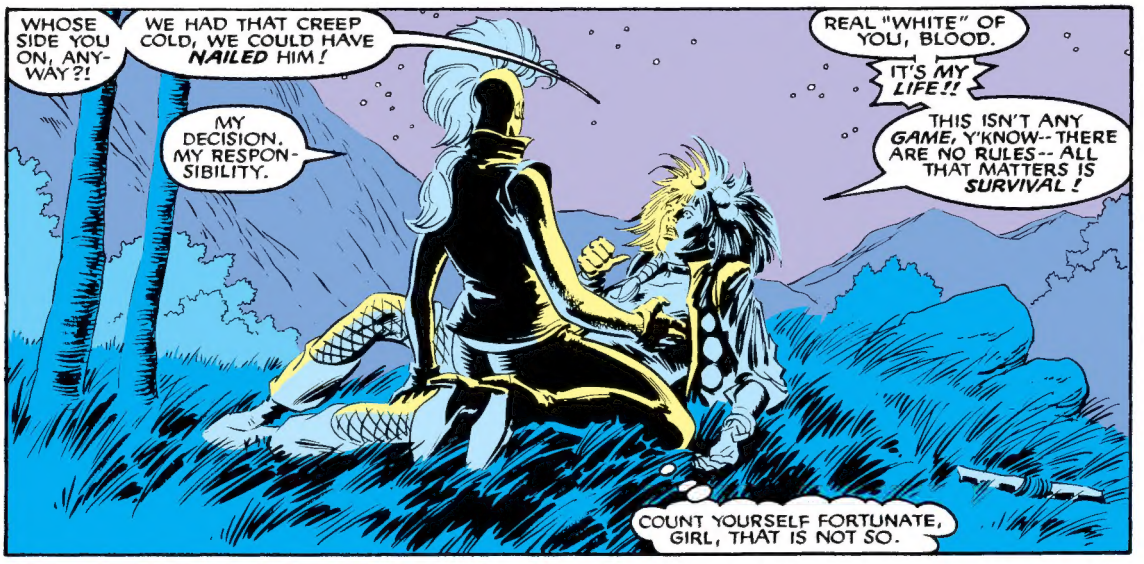
I DO THIS BECAUSE IT IS NECESSARY, PRISCILLA. I TAKE NO PLEASURE IN IT.
NO PROB, SISTER.
IF YOU GOT A CASE OF THE SQUEAMS...
... I'LL WACK THE GEEZER!

PAY 'EM BACK SQUARE FOR WHAT THEY DID TO TOMMY.
DEATH HAS NO MEANING FOR YOU, DOES IT?
YOU GOT A NERVE, ACTING SO SUPERIOR--


--CONSIDERING YOU'RE THE ONE RIGGING THIS BOOBY TRAP.
TRUE ENOUGH. WOLVERINE WOULD HAVE NO QUALMS.
AM I THE BETTER, OR WORSE, FOR HAVING MINE?
LOOK, I DON'T WANT TO SCRAP.

JUST GET ME CLEAR OF THIS MESS--
-- AND YOU CAN NAME YOUR PRICE.


THE MOUNTAINS ARE STILL-- THE PRIMEVAL WILDERNESS OF NEW YORK'S ADIRONDACK FOREST PRESERVE LEACHED OF ALL COLOR SAVE SHADES OF GREY BY THE PREDAWN HALFLIGHT-- BALANCED SUPERNALLY BETWEEN ASLEEP AND AWAKE...
...BETWEEN REALITIES MAGICKAL AND MUNDANE.
STORM HASN'T SLEPT...
...AND AT THIS WORST OF ALL POSSIBLE TIMES, FATIGUE GNAWS AT THE FRINGES OF HER CONSCIOUSNESS.
CRYSTAL COBALT EYES NARROW, BREATH CATCHES MOMENTARILY IN HER THROAT...
...AS DISTANT TREES SUDDENLY STIR, BRANCHES SWAY.
WHAT DO YOU SEE?!
HUSH!
WIND, WHERE THERE WAS NONE, BILLOWING UPWARDS FROM THE ROAD.
SUPER SABRE.
GREAT!
THIS'LL BE FUN!
MERCIFUL GODDESS, WHAT AM I DOING?!
ACTING LIKE WOLVERINE.
BUT I AM NOT WOLVERINE!
HEY--!?!
HE'S ALMOST HERE!
LET HIM PASS!
THE HECK I WILL!
WE'RE JUST DOING TO HIM...
...WHAT HE WOULD TO US-- WITHOUT A SECOND THOUGHT!
BE STILL.
BE SILENT.
LET HIM PASS.
ZZOOM


WHOSE SIDE YOU ON, ANYWAY?!
WE HAD THAT CREEP COLD, WE COULD HAVE NAILED HIM!
MY DECISION. MY RESPONSIBILITY.
REAL "WHITE" OF YOU, BLOOD.
IT'S MY LIFE!!
THIS ISN'T ANY GAME, Y'KNOW-- THERE ARE NO RULES-- ALL THAT MATTERS IS SURVIVAL!
COUNT YOURSELF FORTUNATE, GIRL, THAT IS NOT SO.

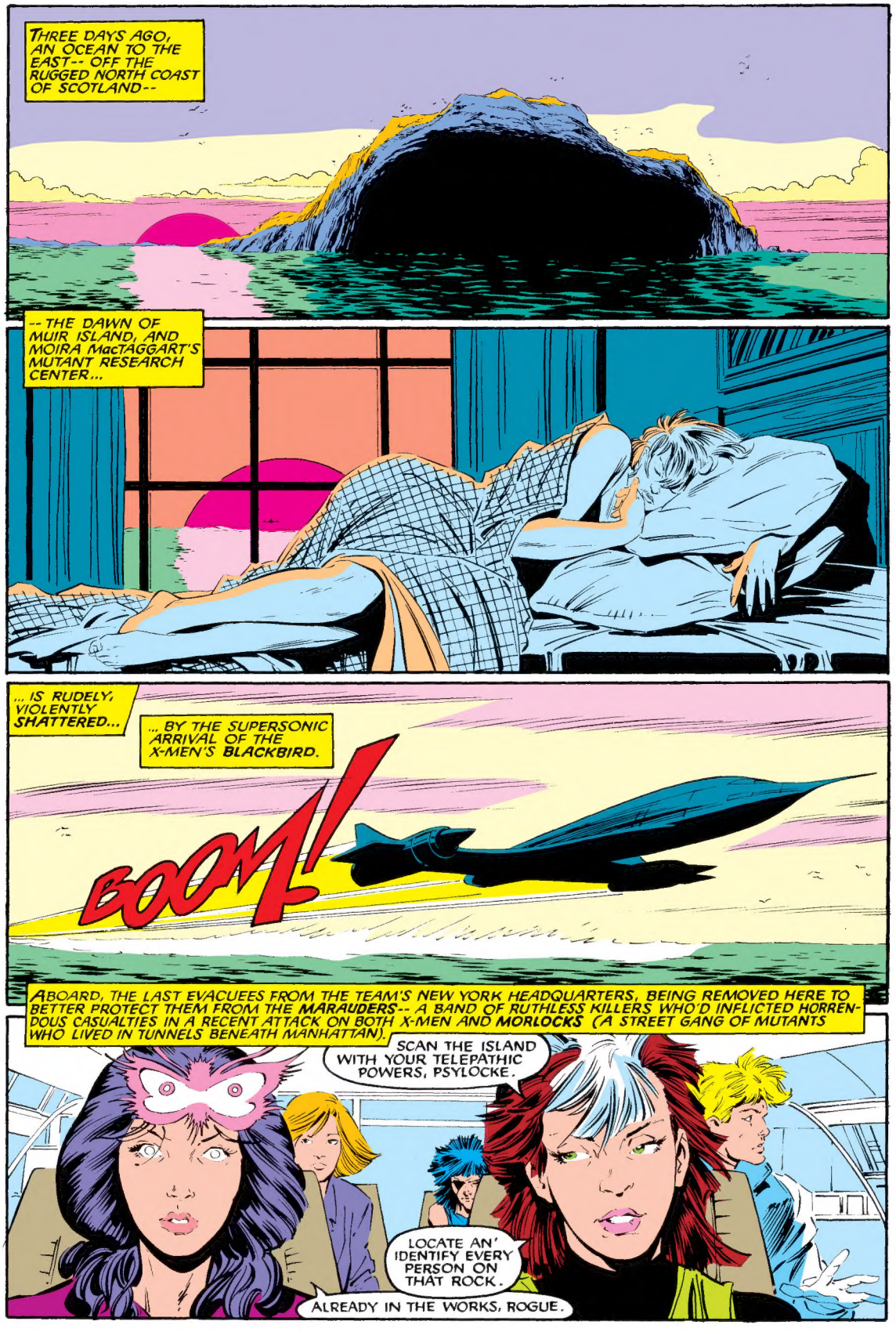
DO NOT FEAR, WE SHALL SURVIVE.
BUT SO LONG AS WE ARE TOGETHER, ON MY TERMS.
FOR WHAT THEY'RE WORTH.

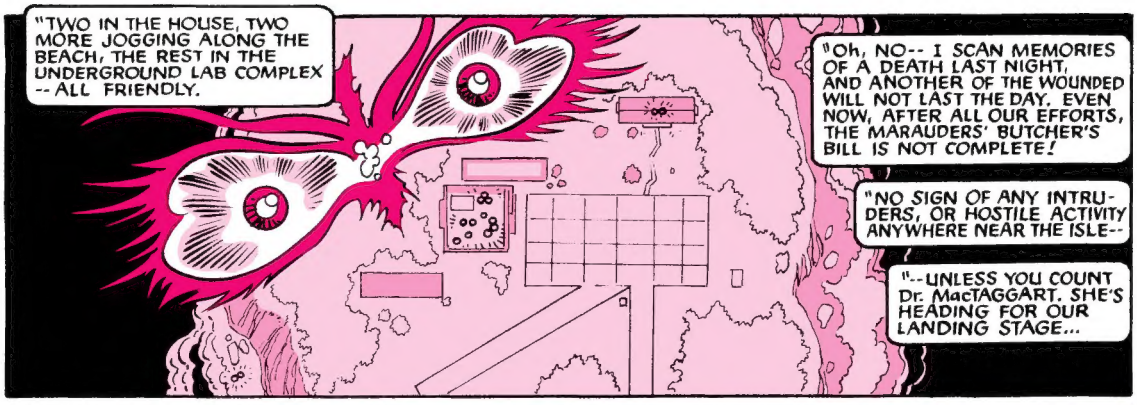
WHERE TO NEXT, THEN?
A BUS STOP, I HOPE.
WE CROSS THAT RIDGE ACROSS THE VALLEY. BY MID-MORNING.
YOU'RE CRAZY!
I CAN'T MAKE THAT HIKE, NO WAY!

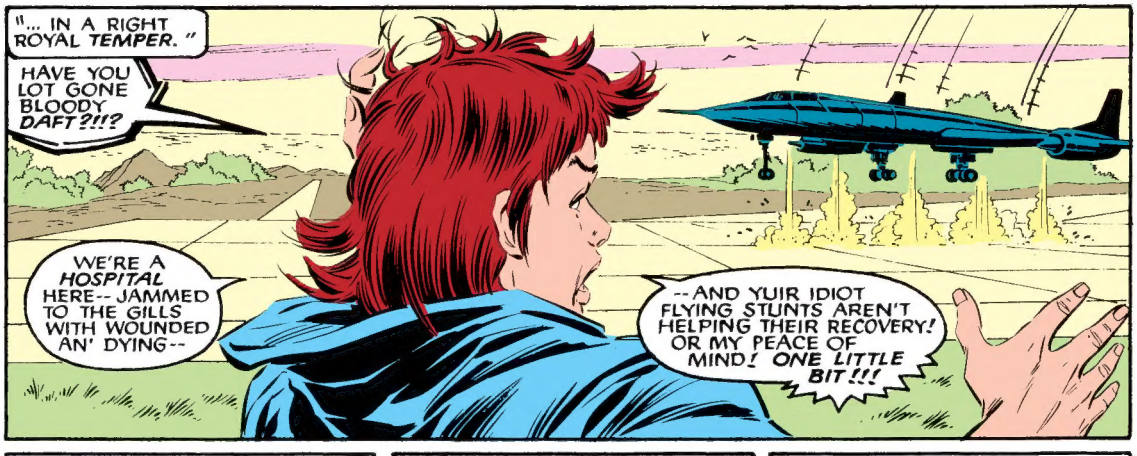
YOU WOULD RATHER STAY BEHIND?
PART OF ME WANTS HER TO SAY, "YES."
BUT I WILL NOT LISTEN IF SHE DOES.

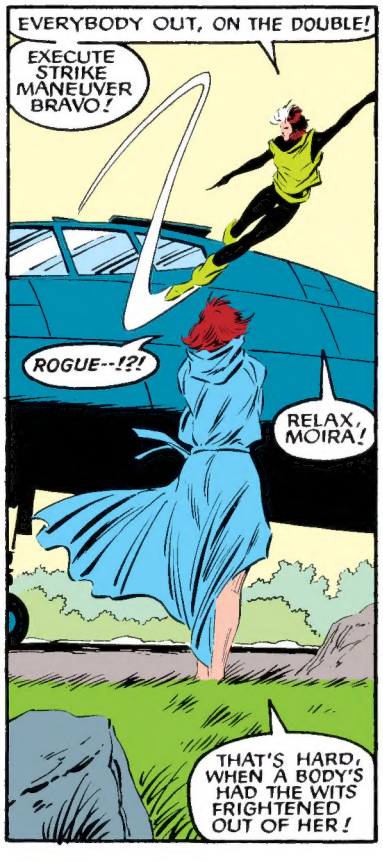
THE X-MEN HAVE ALWAYS STOOD MORE FOR IDEALS, THAN REALITY-- STARTING WITH OUR FOUNDER'S DREAM OF A WORLD WHERE MUTANT AND HUMAN COULD LIVE TOGETHER IN PEACE AND HARMONY.
AS LEADER, I AM SUPPOSED TO EXEMPLIFY THOSE BELIEFS.

IT IS NOT THAT SAVING THE GIRL IS THE RIGHT THING TO DO-- THOUGH IT MAY WELL BE--
-- IT IS THAT, FOR BETTER OR WORSE...
...ABANDONING HER IS TOTALLY WRONG.


THREE DAYS AGO, AN OCEAN TO THE EAST-- OFF THE RUGGED NORTH COAST OF SCOTLAND--
-- THE DAWN OF MUIR ISLAND, AND MOIRA MacTAGGART'S MUTANT RESEARCH CENTER...
... IS RUDELY, VIOLENTLY SHATTERED...
... BY THE SUPERSONIC ARRIVAL OF THE X-MEN'S BLACKBIRD.
BOOM!
ABOARD, THE LAST EVACUEES FROM THE TEAM'S NEW YORK HEADQUARTERS, BEING REMOVED HERE TO BETTER PROTECT THEM FROM THE MARAUDERS-- A BAND OF RUTHLESS KILLERS WHO'D INFLICTED HORRENDOUS CASUALTIES IN A RECENT ATTACK ON BOTH X-MEN AND MORLOCKS (A STREET GANG OF MUTANTS WHO LIVED IN TUNNELS BENEATH MANHATTAN).
SCAN THE ISLAND WITH YOUR TELEPATHIC POWERS, PSYLOCKE.
LOCATE AN' IDENTIFY EVERY PERSON ON THAT ROCK.
ALREADY IN THE WORKS, ROGUE.


"TWO IN THE HOUSE, TWO MORE JOGGING ALONG THE BEACH, THE REST IN THE UNDERGROUND LAB COMPLEX --ALL FRIENDLY.
"Oh, NO-- I SCAN MEMORIES OF A DEATH LAST NIGHT, AND ANOTHER OF THE WOUNDED WILL NOT LAST THE DAY. EVEN NOW, AFTER ALL OUR EFFORTS, THE MARAUDERS' BUTCHER'S BILL IS NOT COMPLETE!
"NO SIGN OF ANY INTRUDERS, OR HOSTILE ACTIVITY ANYWHERE NEAR THE ISLE--
"--UNLESS YOU COUNT Dr. MacTAGGART. SHE'S HEADING FOR OUR LANDING STAGE...


"... IN A RIGHT ROYAL TEMPER."
HAVE YOU LOT GONE BLOODY DAFT?!!?
WE'RE A HOSPITAL HERE-- JAMMED TO THE GILLS WITH WOUNDED AN' DYING--
--AND YUIR IDIOT FLYING STUNTS AREN'T HELPING THEIR RECOVERY! OR MY PEACE OF MIND! ONE LITTLE BIT!!!


EVERYBODY OUT, ON THE DOUBLE!
EXECUTE STRIKE MANEUVER BRAVO!
ROGUE--!?!
RELAX, MOIRA!
THAT'S HARD, WHEN A BODY'S HAD THE WITS FRIGHTENED OUT OF HER!

AH DIDN'T WANT TO TAKE ANY CHANCES. THE IDEA WAS TO ASSUME THE MARAUDERS WERE WAITIN' FOR US.
GOOD THING THEY AREN'T.
WHERE ARE STORM AN' WOLVERINE?!
WHOOPS!
OFF ON THEIR OWN. NECESSARY, THEY SAID. TOLD US TO STAY HERE TILL THEY SENT WORD.

TROUBLE IS, WE NEED 'EM AS BADLY WITH US! THERE'S TOO MUCH TO DO, MOIRA, AN' NO TIME TO DO IT, AN' THEY'RE THE ONES WE DEPEND ON MOST! OUR TEACHERS. OUR LEADERS!
WITHOUT THEM, WE'RE CRIPPLED!
WITHOUT US--TO BACK 'EM UP, IN CASE THEY GET AMBUSHED BY THE MARAUDERS --THEY'RE HISTORY!

UPSTATE NEW YORK, THREE HOURS AFTER SUNRISE...

...WHERE THE OTHER TWO HUNTERS-- LOUIS HAMILTON (STONEWALL) AND FRANK BOHANNAN (THE CRIMSON COMMANDO) -- HAVE FOUND SIGNS OF THEIR QUARRY...

WE'VE SERIOUSLY UNDER-ESTIMATED STORM.

SHE PUSHED HERSELF AND THE GIRL FARTHER, FASTER THAN ANYONE ELSE WE'VE HUNTED. AND CHOSE A BRILLIANT, COURSE, TOO-- THROUGH THE HEART OF THE DEEP WOODS, WHERE SUPER SABRE CAN'T FOLLOW.

HE HAS TO STAY ON THE ROADS-- WHERE SHE SET THIS TRAP, AS EFFECTIVE AS ANY *I'VE* EVER COME UP WITH. WOMAN KNOWS HER BUSINESS.

THING IS, SIGNS ALL INDICATE MARTIN PASSED THIS WAY BEFORE DAYBREAK. STORM AND THE GIRL WERE WAITING UP HERE, PERFECTLY POSITIONED.

WHY DIDN'T SHE SPRING THE TRAP?

PERHAPS, FRANK, SHE HAD SECOND THOUGHTS?

AS WE OUGHT TO.

THERE, IT'S SET *JUST* RIGHT--

--TO SLICE THROUGH A NECK!

STORM COMMITTED NO CRIME, COMMANDO-- SHE ISN'T LIKE THE OTHERS WE'VE DEALT WITH-- SHE'S INVOLVED BECAUSE OF *OUR* MISTAKE.

WHY CAN'T WE LET HER GO?

AND SPEND THE REST OF OUR LIVES IN JAIL?

WHAT WOULD THAT ACCOMPLISH?

WE DO GOOD WORK, STONEY.

WE RID SOCIETY OF THE CROOKS-- THE KILLERS, THE RAPISTS, THE DRUG-DEALING SCUM-- WHO'VE PLACED THEMSELVES BEYOND THE REACH OF THE LAW.

AND WE'RE USING A METHOD THAT STRIKES TERROR INTO THOSE THAT ARE LEFT...

... MAKIN' IT THAT MUCH EASIER FOR THE COPS TO DO THEIR JOB.

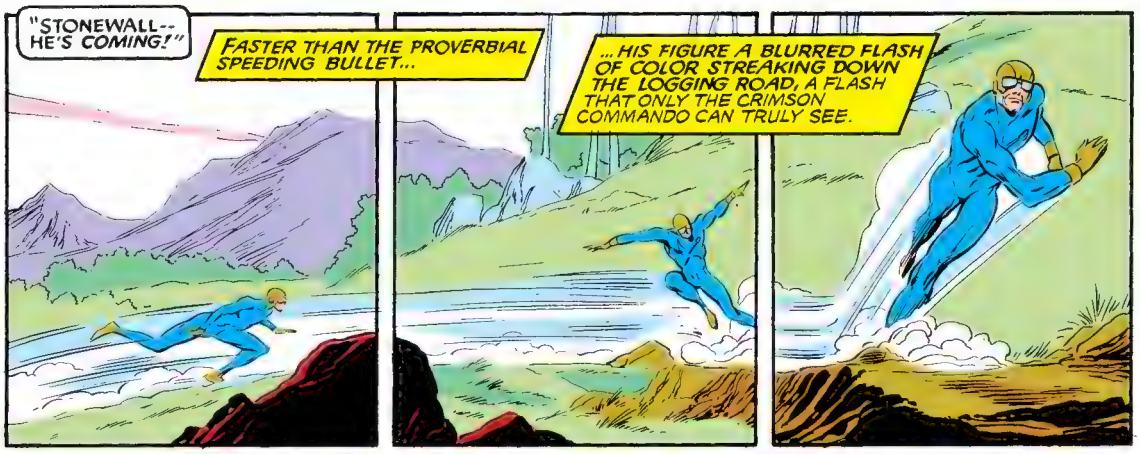
WE'RE DOING WHAT WE SWORE TO, YEARS AGO, WHEN WE PUT ON THESE UNIFORMS-- WE'RE PROTECTING OUR COUNTRY. YOU SAYING THAT'S WRONG?

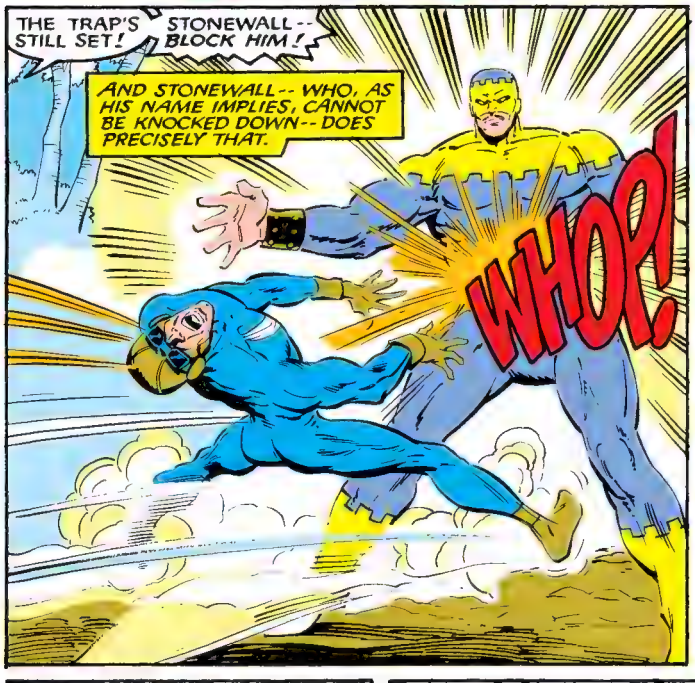
BESIDES, WE'VE ONLY STORM'S WORD THAT SHE'S INNOCENT.

ISN'T THAT SUPPOSED TO BE ENOUGH, UNTIL WE *PROVE* DIFFERENT?!

REMEMBER, SHE DIDN'T KILL MARTIN, WHEN SHE HAD THE CHANCE.

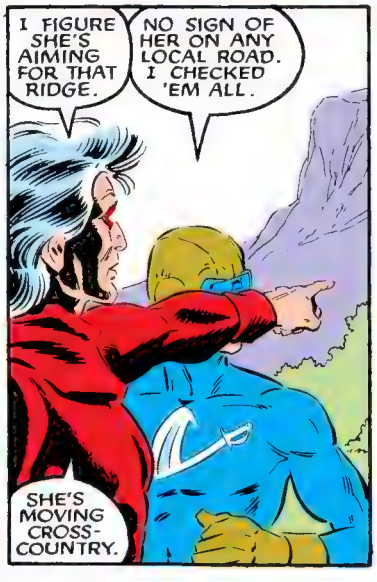
MARTIN-- *SUPER SABRE--!?!*


"STONEWALL-- HE'S COMING!"
FASTER THAN THE PROVERBIAL SPEEDING BULLET...
...HIS FIGURE A BLURRED FLASH OF COLOR STREAKING DOWN THE LOGGING ROAD, A FLASH THAT ONLY THE CRIMSON COMMANDO CAN TRULY SEE.

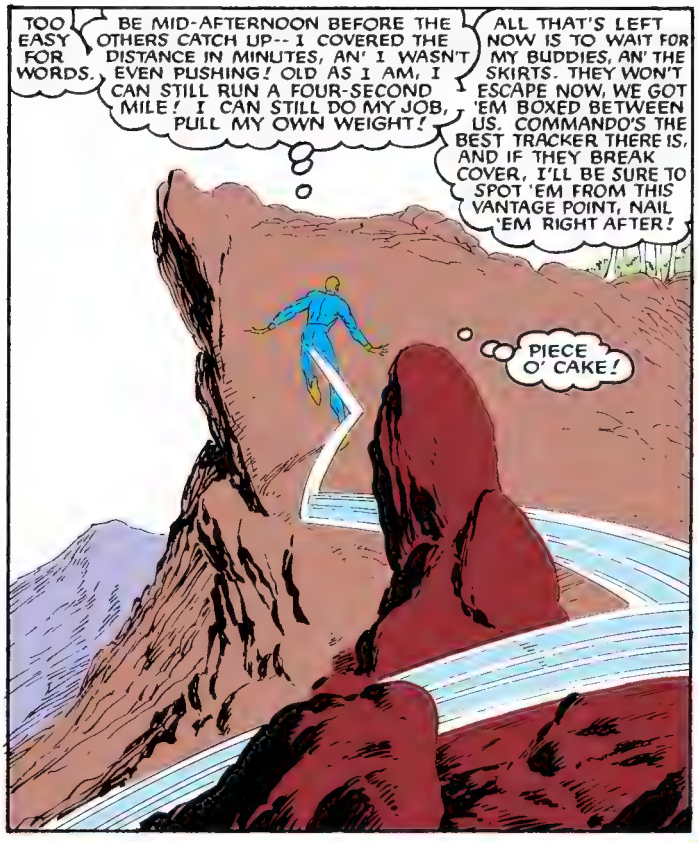

THE TRAP'S STILL SET!
STONEWALL-- BLOCK HIM!
AND STONEWALL-- WHO, AS HIS NAME IMPLIES, CANNOT BE KNOCKED DOWN-- DOES PRECISELY THAT.
WHOP!

SABRE, IN HIS IGNORANCE, IS NOT AMUSED.
OF ALL THE LAME-BRAINED, IDJIT STUNTS--?!
SORRY ABOUT THAT, MARTIN.
I'LL JUST BET YOU ARE, YOU GREAT THUMPING LUMMOX--
I WAS SAVING YOUR LIFE.
--HA!

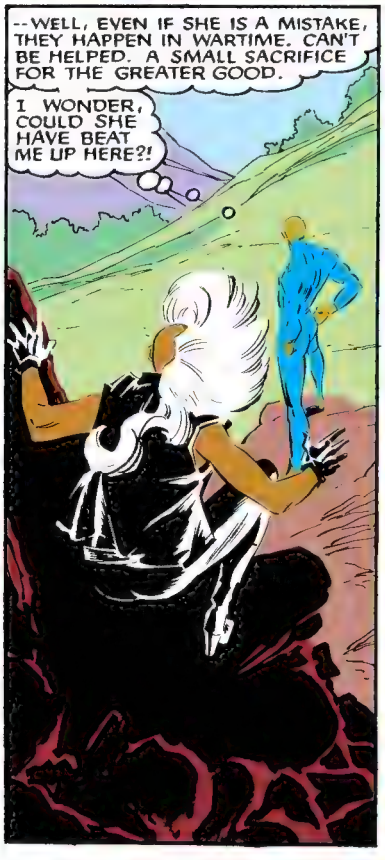
FISHING LINE, STRETCHED ACROSS YOUR PATH, HEAD-HIGH. AT YOUR VELOCITY, YOU'D HAVE LOST YOURS.
SKIRT DID THAT?
STORM.


I FIGURE SHE'S AIMING FOR THAT RIDGE.
NO SIGN OF HER ON ANY LOCAL ROAD. I CHECKED 'EM ALL.
SHE'S MOVING CROSS-COUNTRY.

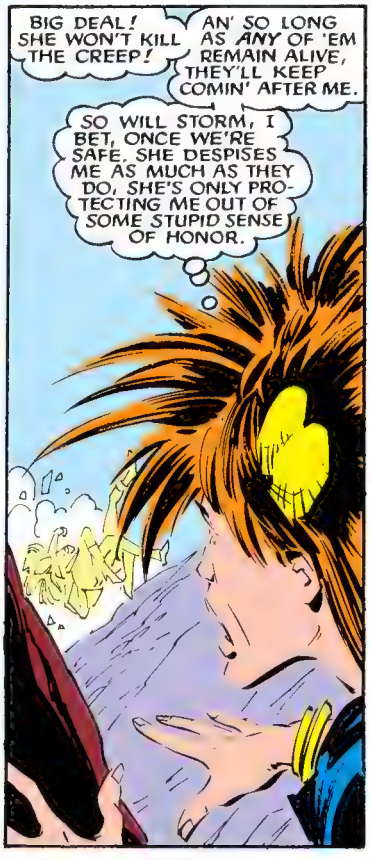
NO PROBLEM. I MAY NOT BE ABLE TO FOLLOW HER TRAIL...
...BUT I CAN SURE BEAT HER TO WHERE SHE'S GOING!
SEE YOU THERE, SLOW-POKES!!

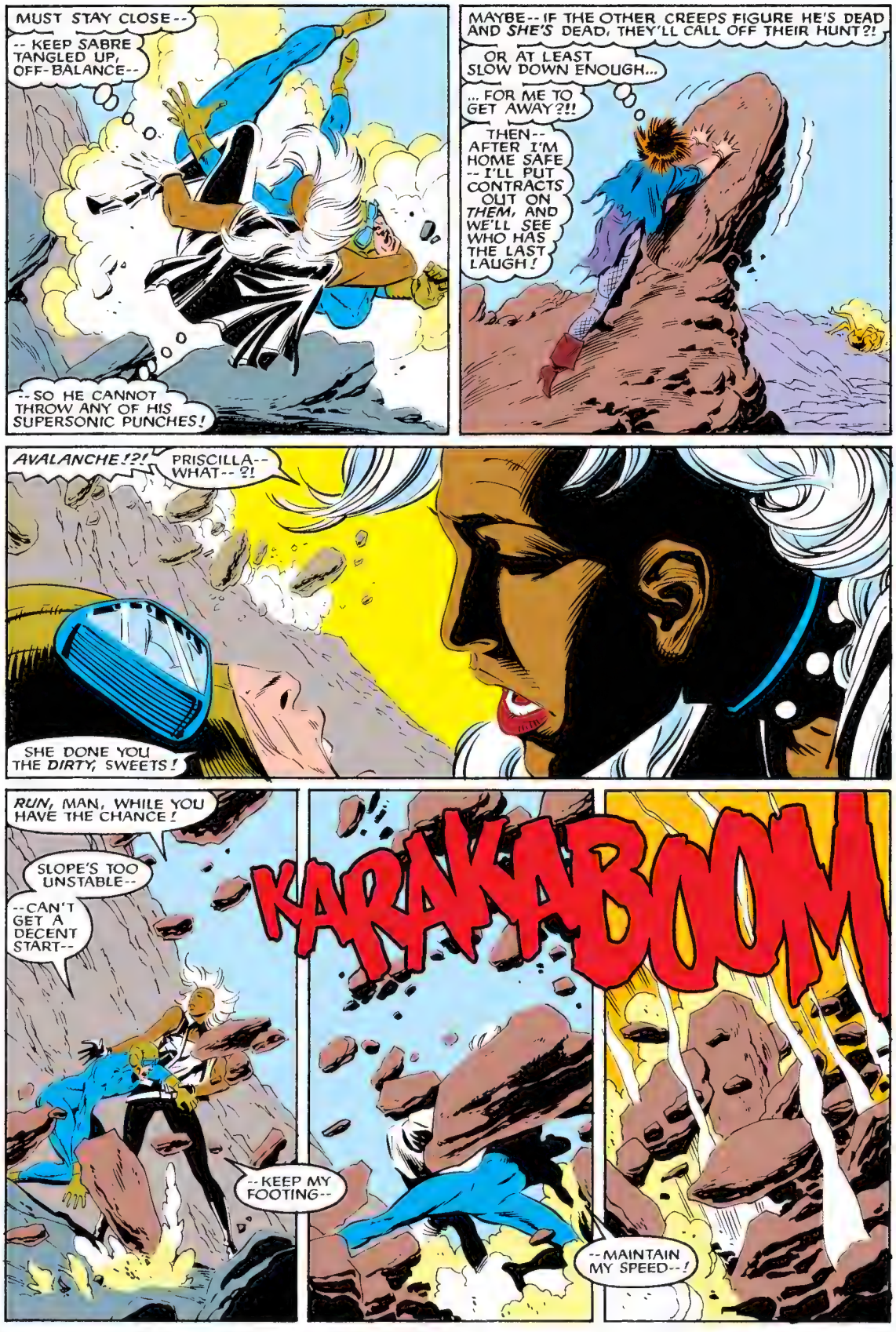

TOO EASY FOR WORDS.
BE MID-AFTERNOON BEFORE THE OTHERS CATCH UP-- I COVERED THE DISTANCE IN MINUTES, AN' I WASN'T EVEN PUSHING! OLD AS I AM, I CAN STILL RUN A FOUR-SECOND MILE! I CAN STILL DO MY JOB, PULL MY OWN WEIGHT!
ALL THAT'S LEFT NOW IS TO WAIT FOR MY BUDDIES, AN' THE SKIRTS. THEY WON'T ESCAPE NOW, WE GOT 'EM BOXED BETWEEN US. COMMANDO'S THE BEST TRACKER THERE IS, AND IF THEY BREAK COVER, I'LL BE SURE TO SPOT 'EM FROM THIS VANTAGE POINT, NAIL 'EM RIGHT AFTER!
PIECE O' CAKE!

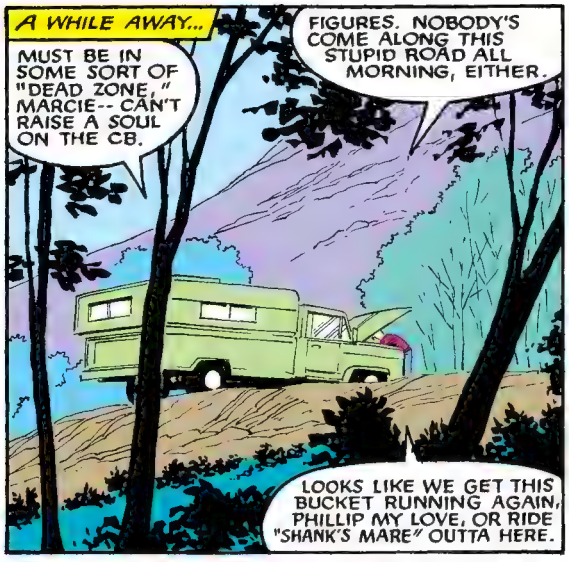
LOUIS WAS LOOKIN' PRETTY SOUR. PROB'LY GOT A CLASS-"A" ATTACK OF THE GUILTS.
THESE SLIME DON'T DESERVE IT. PRISCILLA MORRISON DIDN'T CARE BEANS ABOUT THE DECENT KIDS SHE TURNED INTO COKE-FIENDS, AN' WORSE!
WHY SHOULD WE TREAT HER ANY DIFFERENT?
AS FOR STORM--

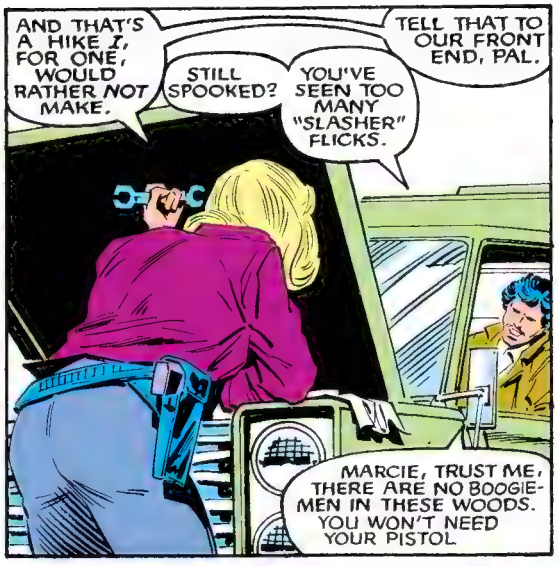

--WELL, EVEN IF SHE IS A MISTAKE, THEY HAPPEN IN WARTIME. CAN'T BE HELPED. A SMALL SACRIFICE FOR THE GREATER GOOD.
I WONDER, COULD SHE HAVE BEAT ME UP HERE?!

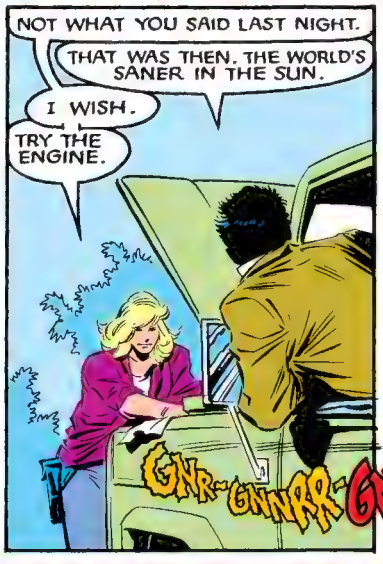
NAH-- NOT A CHA
HEY!?!
I HAVE HIM!

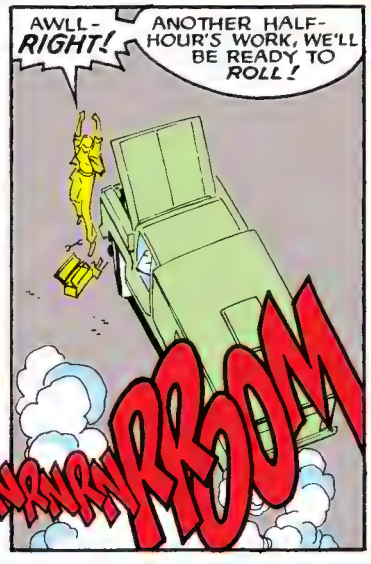

BIG DEAL! SHE WON'T KILL THE CREEP!
AN' SO LONG AS ANY OF 'EM REMAIN ALIVE, THEY'LL KEEP COMIN' AFTER ME.
SO WILL STORM, I BET, ONCE WE'RE SAFE. SHE DESPISES ME AS MUCH AS THEY DO, SHE'S ONLY PROTECTING ME OUT OF SOME STUPID SENSE OF HONOR.


MUST STAY CLOSE--
-- KEEP SABRE TANGLED UP, OFF-BALANCE--
--SO HE CANNOT THROW ANY OF HIS SUPERSONIC PUNCHES!
MAYBE-- IF THE OTHER CREEPS FIGURE HE'S DEAD AND SHE'S DEAD, THEY'LL CALL OFF THEIR HUNT?!
OR AT LEAST SLOW DOWN ENOUGH...
... FOR ME TO GET AWAY?!!
THEN-- AFTER I'M HOME SAFE -- I'LL PUT CONTRACTS OUT ON THEM, AND WE'LL SEE WHO HAS THE LAST LAUGH!
AVALANCHE!?!
PRISCILLA-- WHAT-- ?!
SHE DONE YOU THE DIRTY, SWEETS!
RUN, MAN, WHILE YOU HAVE THE CHANCE!
SLOPE'S TOO UNSTABLE--
--CAN'T GET A DECENT START--
--KEEP MY FOOTING--
KARAKABOOM!
--MAINTAIN MY SPEED--!

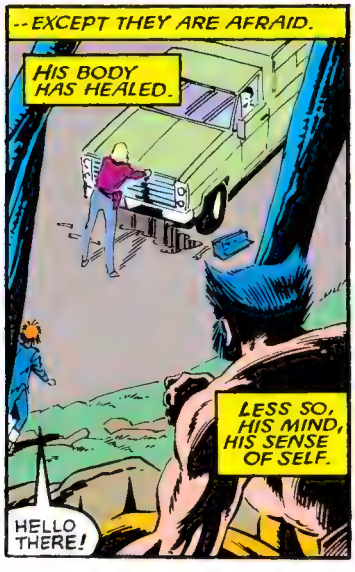

A WHILE AWAY...
MUST BE IN SOME SORT OF "DEAD ZONE," MARCIE-- CAN'T RAISE A SOUL ON THE CB.
FIGURES. NOBODY'S COME ALONG THIS STUPID ROAD ALL MORNING, EITHER.
LOOKS LIKE WE GET THIS BUCKET RUNNING AGAIN, PHILLIP MY LOVE, OR RIDE "SHANK'S MARE" OUTTA HERE.

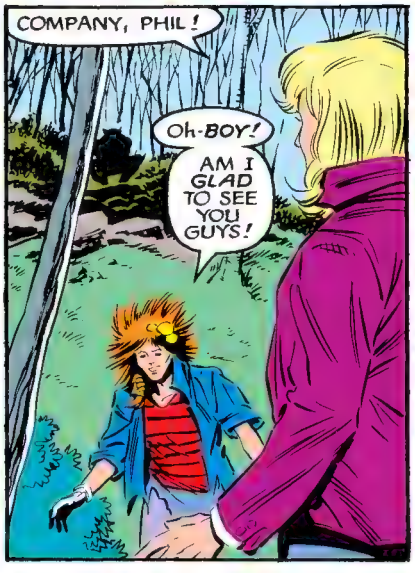

AND THAT'S A HIKE I, FOR ONE, WOULD RATHER NOT MAKE.
STILL SPOOKED?
YOU'VE SEEN TOO MANY "SLASHER" FLICKS.
TELL THAT TO OUR FRONT END, PAL.
MARCIE, TRUST ME, THERE ARE NO BOOGIE-MEN IN THESE WOODS. YOU WON'T NEED YOUR PISTOL


NOT WHAT YOU SAID LAST NIGHT.
THAT WAS THEN. THE WORLD'S SANER IN THE SUN.
I WISH.
TRY THE ENGINE.
GNR-- GNNRR-

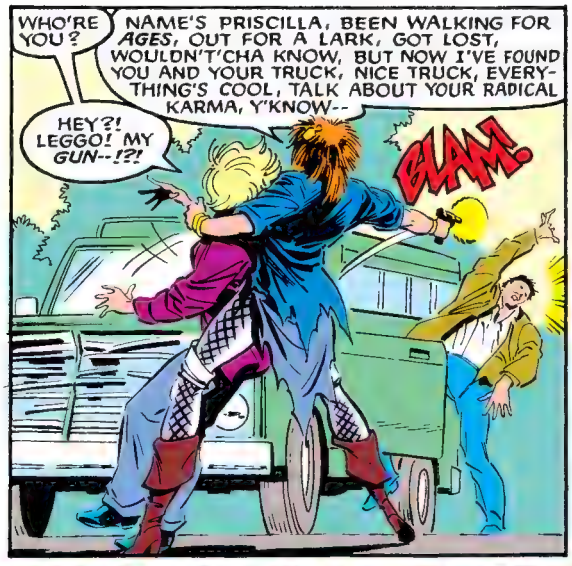

AWLL-RIGHT!
ANOTHER HALF-HOUR'S WORK, WE'LL BE READY TO ROLL!
GNRNRN RROOM

EYES SEE, EARS HEAR--
--SCENTS MATTER MORE.
THESE BEINGS SEEM LIKE HIM--


--EXCEPT THEY ARE AFRAID.
HIS BODY HAS HEALED.
LESS SO, HIS MIND, HIS SENSE OF SELF.
HELLO THERE!


COMPANY, PHIL!
Oh-BOY!
AM I GLAD TO SEE YOU GUYS!

THREAT SCENT.
DANGER!
AND THE OTHERS DO NOT SUSPECT.
Grrrr

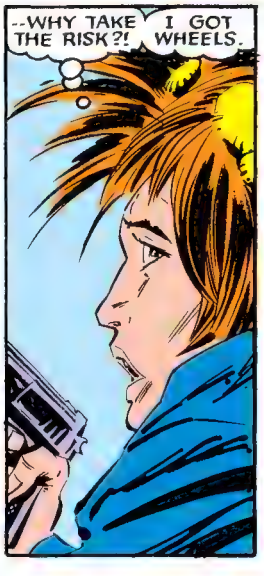

WHO'RE YOU?
NAME'S PRISCILLA, BEEN WALKING FOR AGES, OUT FOR A LARK, GOT LOST, WOULDN'T'CHA KNOW, BUT NOW I'VE FOUND YOU AND YOUR TRUCK, NICE TRUCK, EVERYTHING'S COOL, TALK ABOUT YOUR RADICAL KARMA, Y'KNOW--
HEY?! LEGGO! MY GUN--!?!
BLAM!

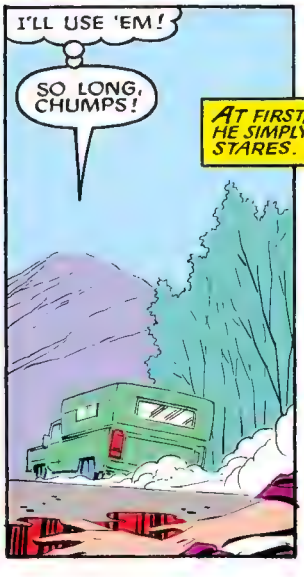
PHILLIP!
YOU SHOT HIM!
KILLED HIM.
LIKE I'M GONNA DO YOU.

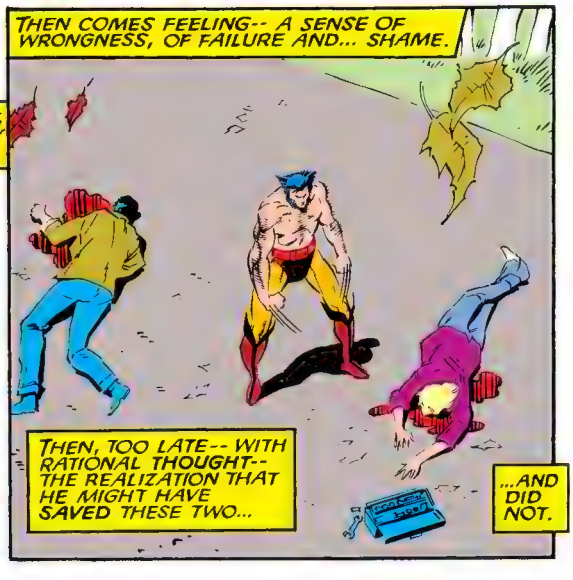
SHOCK TERROR RAGE DENIAL-- ALL JUMBLE-BANGED TOGETHER...
...INTO A SPLIT-SECOND SHRIEK OF SENSORIAL IMAGERY...

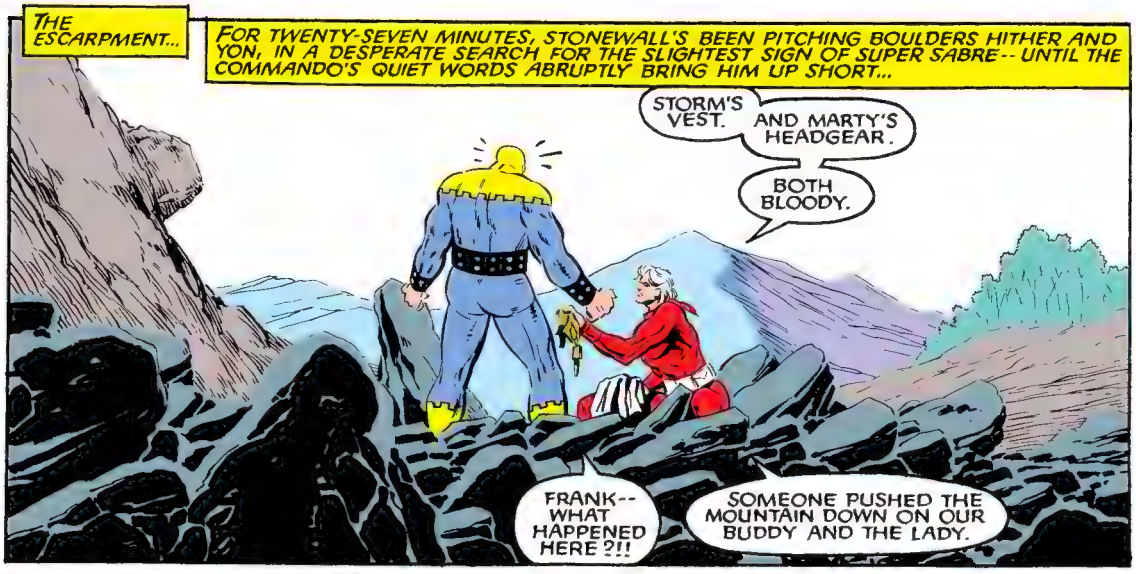
GRRAR!
SNIKT
...THAT STRIKES HIM LIKE A BLOW.

GEEZ!
SOMETHING WATCHING IN THE WOODS-- ANIMAL--FEROCIOUS --CLOSE-BY-- GUN SHOULD STOP IT, STOP ANYTHING--

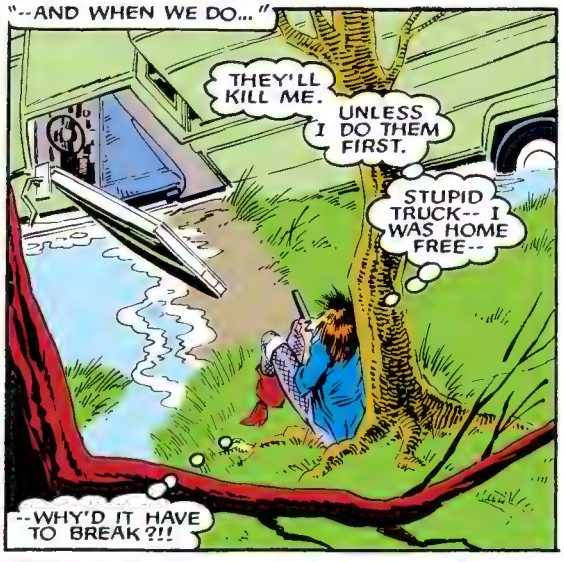

--WHY TAKE THE RISK?!
I GOT WHEELS.

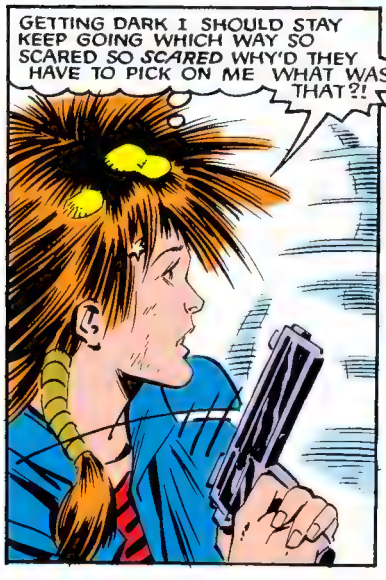

I'LL USE 'EM!
SO LONG, CHUMPS!


AT FIRST, HE SIMPLY STARES.
THEN COMES FEELING-- A SENSE OF WRONGNESS, OF FAILURE AND... SHAME.
THEN, TOO LATE-- WITH RATIONAL THOUGHT-- THE REALIZATION THAT HE MIGHT HAVE SAVED THESE TWO...
...AND DID NOT.


THE ESCARPMENT...
FOR TWENTY-SEVEN MINUTES, STONEWALL'S BEEN PITCHING BOULDERS HITHER AND YON, IN A DESPERATE SEARCH FOR THE SLIGHTEST SIGN OF SUPER SABRE-- UNTIL THE COMMANDO'S QUIET WORDS ABRUPTLY BRING HIM UP SHORT...
STORM'S VEST.
AND MARTY'S HEADGEAR.
BOTH BLOODY.
FRANK-- WHAT HAPPENED HERE ?!!
SOMEONE PUSHED THE MOUNTAIN DOWN ON OUR BUDDY AND THE LADY.

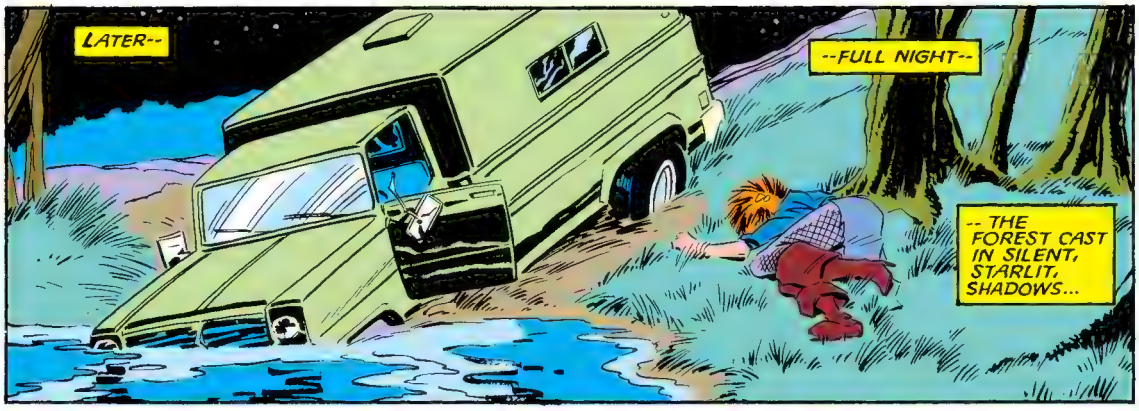
GIVE YOU A GUESS WHO.
STORM WAS THE REAL OPPOSITION, LITTLE MISS MORRISON WAS A FOOL TO TURN ON HER.
DON'T WORRY, STONEY, WE'LL FIND HER-- EASILY, NOW THAT HER PROTECTOR'S OUT OF THE WAY--

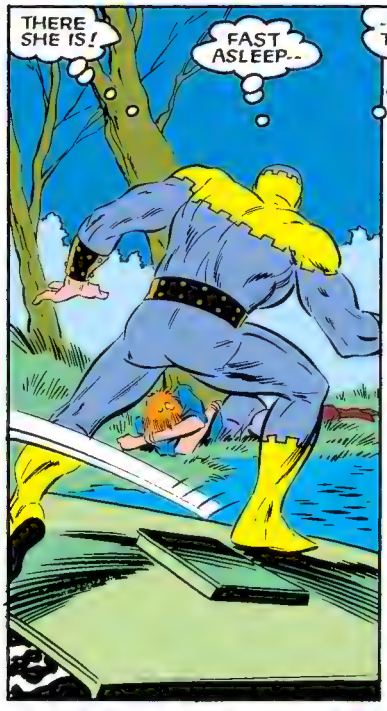

"--AND WHEN WE DO..."
THEY'LL KILL ME.
UNLESS I DO THEM FIRST.
STUPID TRUCK-- I WAS HOME FREE--
--WHY'D IT HAVE TO BREAK ?!!

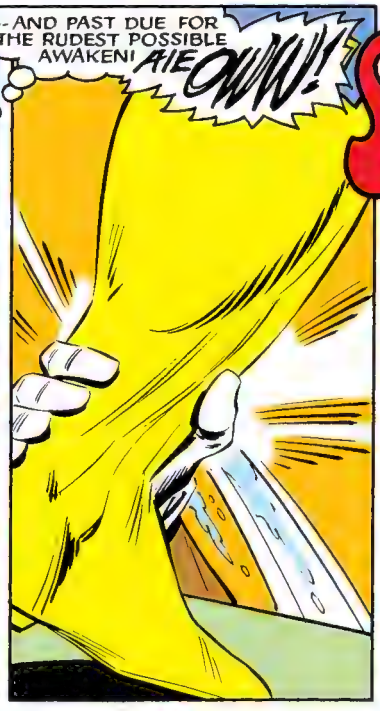

GETTING DARK I SHOULD STAY KEEP GOING WHICH WAY SO SCARED SO *SCARED* WHY'D THEY HAVE TO PICK ON ME WHAT WAS THAT ?!

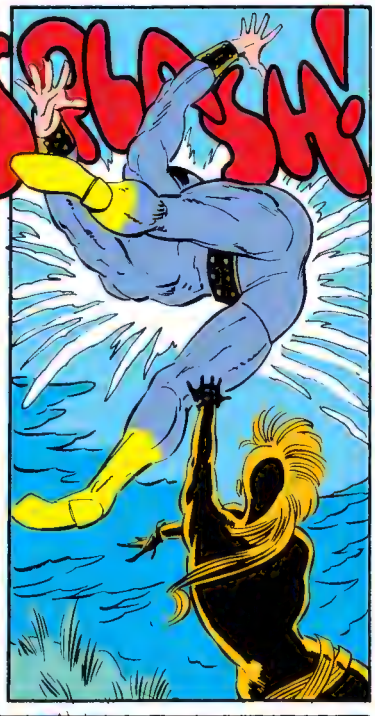
HEART'S HAMMERING WISH I HAD SOME FOOD THE HECK WITH THAT GIVE ANYTHING SELL MY MOTHER'S SOUL THE COW FOR A DECENT LINE SWEET SNOW CANDY TAKE THE EDGE OFF GIVE ME AN EDGE LIGHT MY FIRE TORCH THE WORLD
WHO'S THERE?!!

SURPRISE!


LATER--
--FULL NIGHT--
-- THE FOREST CAST IN SILENT, STARLIT, SHADOWS...


THERE SHE IS!
FAST ASLEEP--

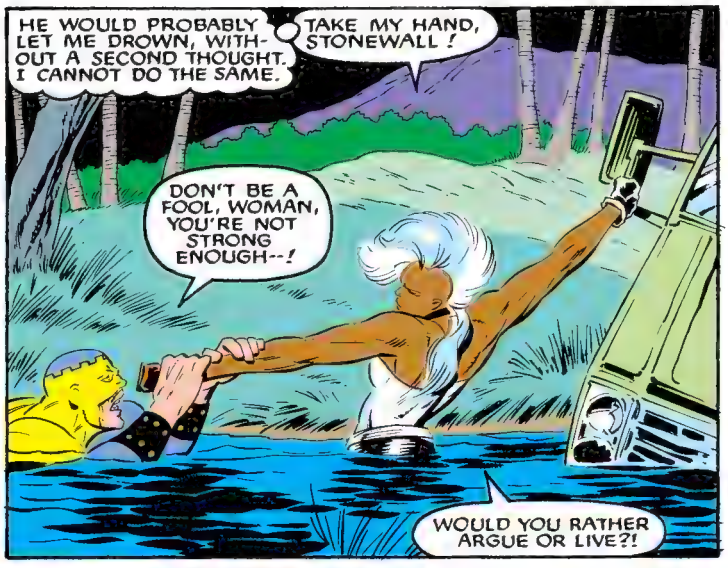

--AND PAST DUE FOR THE RUDEST POSSIBLE AWAKEN!
AIE
OWW!


SPLASH!

IT APPEARS STONEWALLS ARE NOT QUITE AS STURDY AS THEY ONCE MIGHT HAVE BEEN.
THIS IS TWICE NOW I HAVE TOPPLED YOU.
THE COMMANDO SAID YOU WERE DEAD!
CONSIDER ME A GHOST, THEN--

--IF IT MAKES YOU FEEL BETTER.
THE MARSH MUD SHOULD SLOW YOU DOWN LONG ENOUGH FOR ME TO DEAL WITH YOUR TEAMMATE.
WAIT! STORM, THIS ISN'T MUD I'M IN, IT'S LIKE QUICK-SAND!
I'M SINKING!!

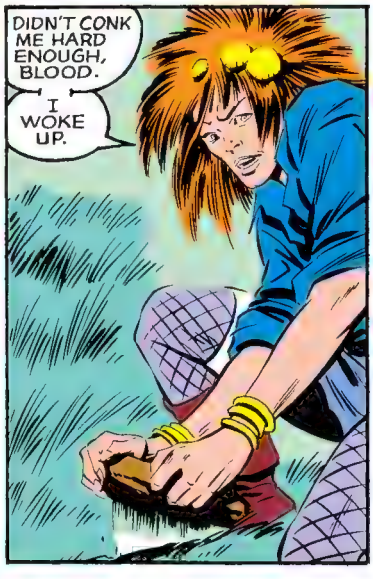
BLAST!
THE FEAR IN HIS VOICE IS REAL, HE IS NOT FAKING.

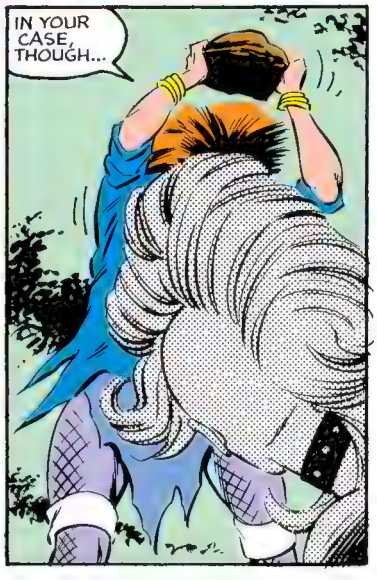

HE WOULD PROBABLY LET ME DROWN, WITHOUT A SECOND THOUGHT. I CANNOT DO THE SAME.
TAKE MY HAND, STONEWALL!
DON'T BE A FOOL, WOMAN, YOU'RE NOT STRONG ENOUGH--!
WOULD YOU RATHER ARGUE OR LIVE?!

HE WEIGHS A-- TON!
AND EVERY SECOND I SPEND WITH HIM MAKES ME MORE VULNERABLE TO THE COMMANDO!
BUT I WILL NOT LET HIM DIE -- ESPECIALLY LIKE THIS!

I D-DON'T BELIEVE IT--!
I AM STRONGER THAN I LOOK.
STEP CAREFULLY-- FOLLOW MY LEAD--
-- IF YOU FALL BACK INTO THE MARSH...

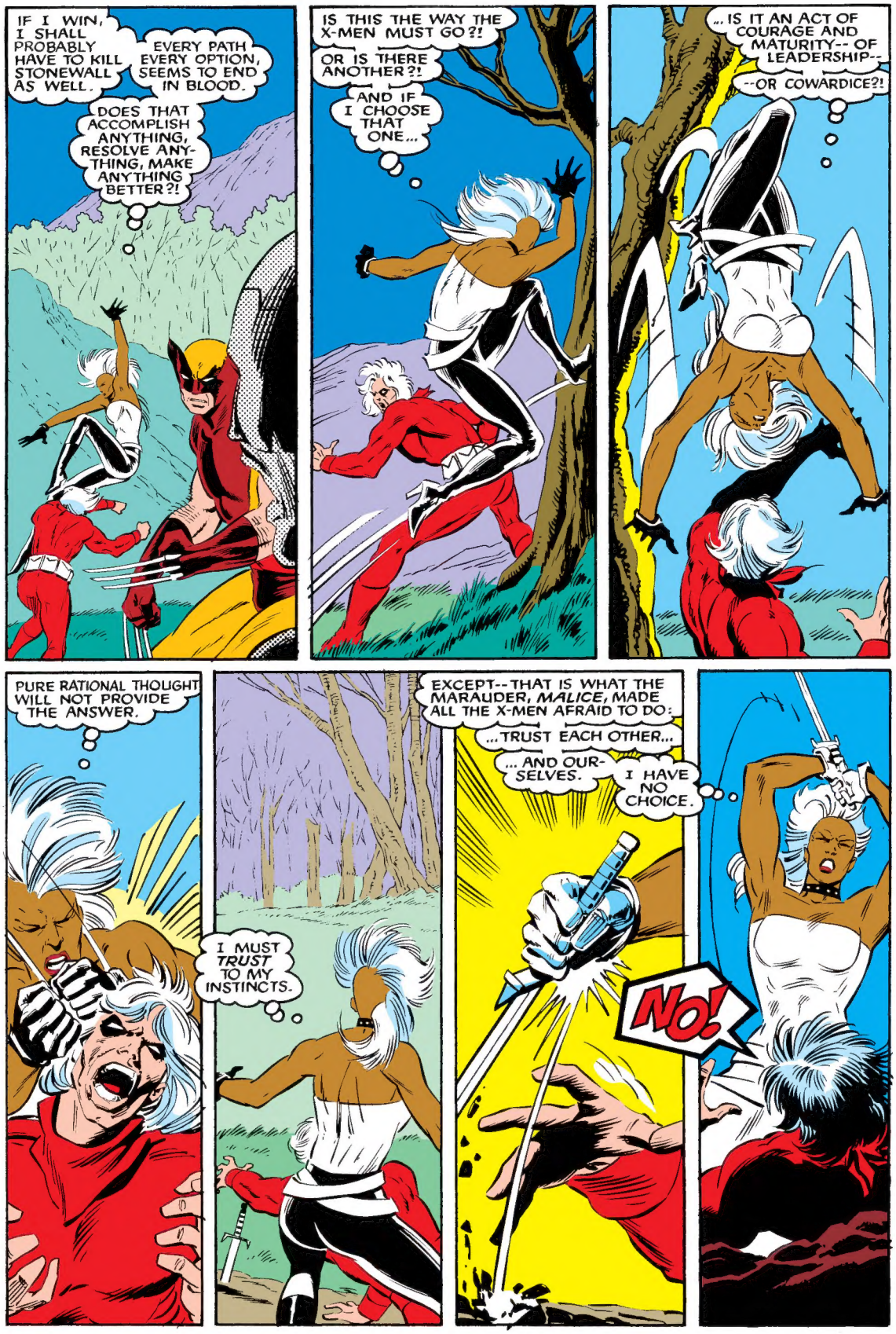
... I DOUBT I CAN PULL YOU FREE AGAIN.

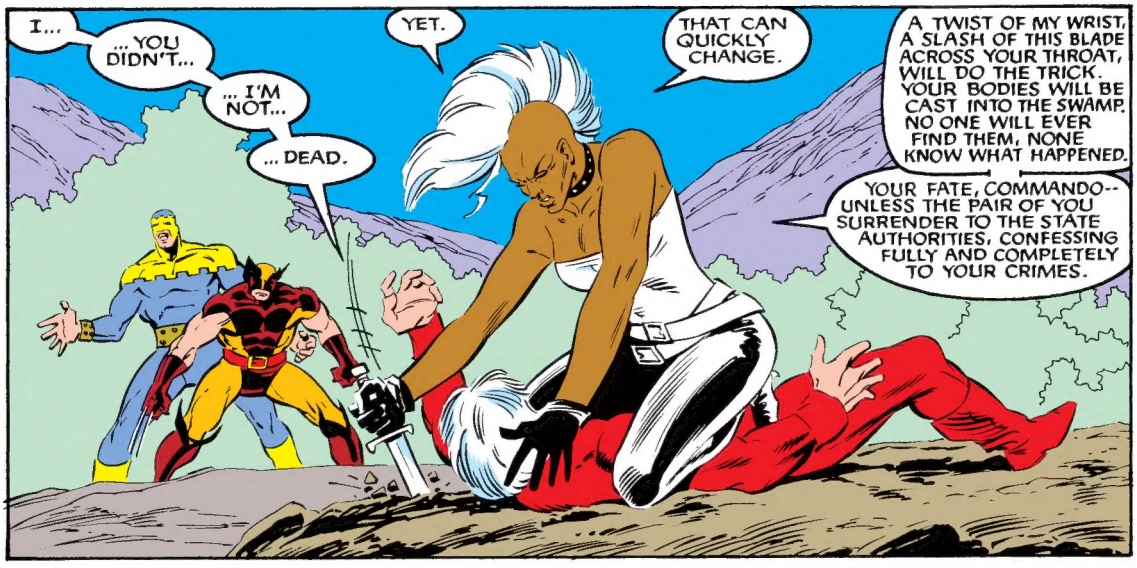

DIDN'T CONK ME HARD ENOUGH, BLOOD.
I WOKE UP.


IN YOUR CASE, THOUGH...

...I WON'T MAKE THE SAME MIST...
THUK
YOUR TURN, MISS.
I'D RECONSIDER THAT COURSE OF ACTION, BUB...
... IF I WERE YOU.
AT THE FIRST SOUND OF WOLVERINE'S VOICE, THE COMMANDO PIVOTS WITH BLINDING SPEED...
...HURLING ONE KNIFE AT WOLVERINE...
SHKT!
KRANG!
...THE OTHER AT STORM.
GIRL KILLED A YOUNG COUPLE A FEW MILES BACK, BUT THOSE SCALES JUST GOT BALANCED.
I DON'T KNOW THESE CLOWNS. WANT ME TO TAKE 'EM, BOSS--
--OR DO WE CALL THINGS QUITS, AN' EVERYONE GOES THEIR SEPARATE WAYS?!
I WISH IT WAS THAT SIMPLE, MY FRIEND.

KEEP WATCH ON STONEWALL, WOLVERINE.
THE CRIMSON COMMANDO IS MINE.
BY THE WAY-- WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN?
I WAS SICK. I GOT BETTER.
YOUR FUNERAL, GIRL.
PERHAPS.
BUT I TRULY DOUBT IT.
KRAK!
I COULD HAVE ABANDONED PRISCILLA-- BY CHOOSING NOT TO, FOR THE SUPPOSEDLY "BEST" OF REASONS, TWO INNOCENTS ARE DEAD, SABRE IS PROBABLY DEAD.
I COULD NOT EVEN SAVE PRISCILLA HERSELF.
THWK!
IF THE COMMANDO SLAYS ME, WOLVERINE WILL DO THE SAME TO HIM AND STONEWALL--
-- OR BE SLAIN IN TURN.
BOOM!


IF I WIN, I SHALL PROBABLY HAVE TO KILL STONEWALL AS WELL.
EVERY PATH EVERY OPTION, SEEMS TO END IN BLOOD.
DOES THAT ACCOMPLISH ANYTHING, RESOLVE ANYTHING, MAKE ANYTHING BETTER?!
IS THIS THE WAY THE X-MEN MUST GO?!
OR IS THERE ANOTHER?!
AND IF I CHOOSE THAT ONE...
...IS IT AN ACT OF COURAGE AND MATURITY-- OF LEADERSHIP--
--OR COWARDICE?!
PURE RATIONAL THOUGHT WILL NOT PROVIDE THE ANSWER.
I MUST TRUST TO MY INSTINCTS.
EXCEPT--THAT IS WHAT THE MARAUDER, MALICE, MADE ALL THE X-MEN AFRAID TO DO:
...TRUST EACH OTHER...
...AND OURSELVES.
I HAVE NO CHOICE.
NO!


I...
... YOU DIDN'T...
... I'M NOT...
... DEAD.
YET.
THAT CAN QUICKLY CHANGE.
A TWIST OF MY WRIST, A SLASH OF THIS BLADE ACROSS YOUR THROAT, WILL DO THE TRICK. YOUR BODIES WILL BE CAST INTO THE SWAMP. NO ONE WILL EVER FIND THEM, NONE KNOW WHAT HAPPENED.
YOUR FATE, COMMANDO-- UNLESS THE PAIR OF YOU SURRENDER TO THE STATE AUTHORITIES, CONFESSING FULLY AND COMPLETELY TO YOUR CRIMES.

SHE'S BLUFFING!
GUESS AGAIN, BUB.
BLAZES, THIS TIME SHE REALLY ISN'T! SHE MEANS EVERY FLAMIN' WORD!!

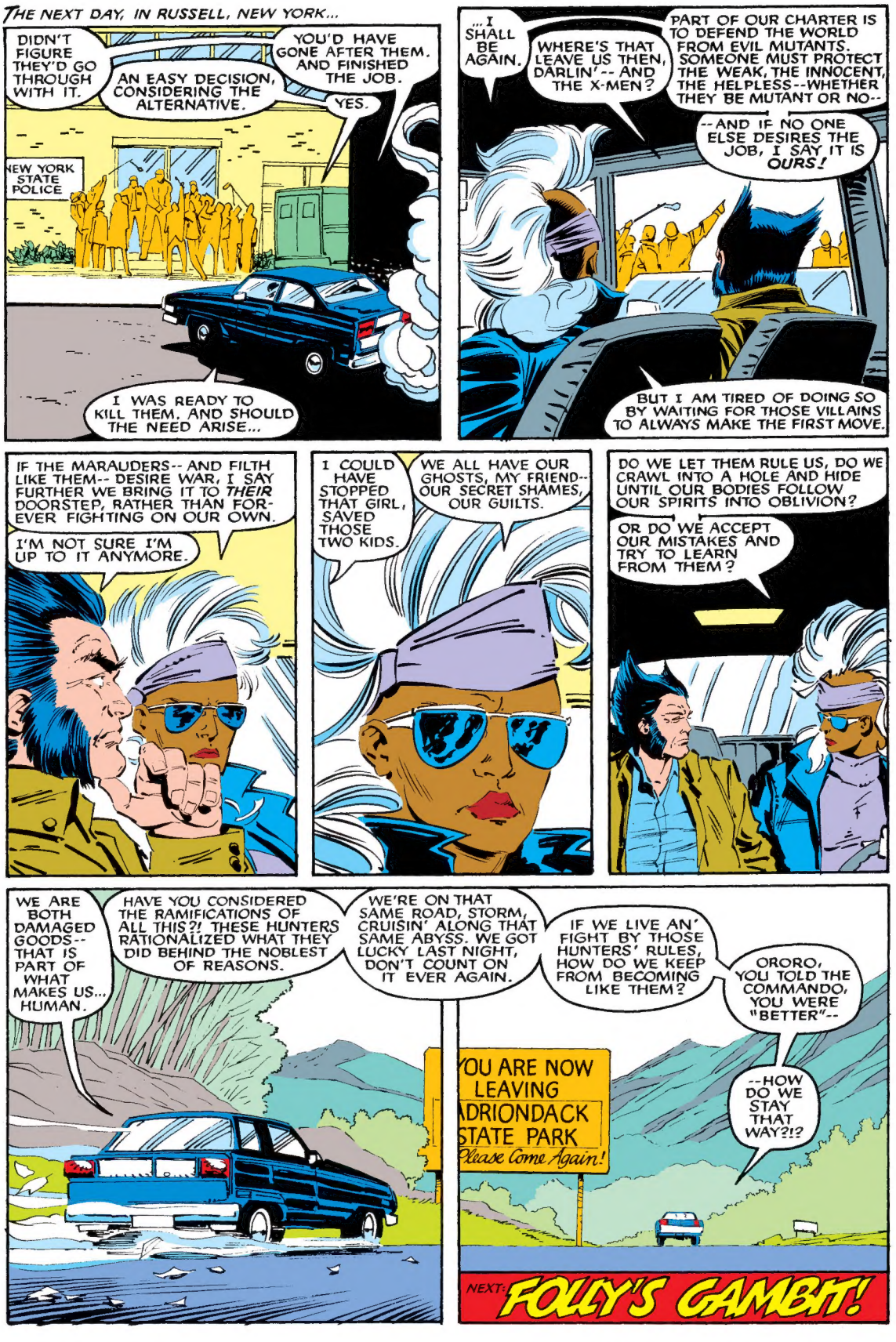
I'M NOT AFRAID TO DIE.
ARE YOU AFRAID THEN TO LIVE?
HAVE YOU SO LITTLE REGARD FOR NAME AND FAMILY--

--FOR WHO YOU ARE AND WHAT YOU HAVE DONE--THAT YOU WOULD RATHER VANISH LIKE VERMIN THAN STAND UP FOR YOUR CAUSE?

SO BE IT--!
STORM, WAIT! DON'T!
FRANK, WITH THE LAW--
-- BEFORE A JURY OF OUR PEERS, PEOPLE LIKE US, WHERE WE CAN EXPLAIN...

... AND JUSTIFY OUR ACTIONS -- WE HAVE A CHANCE FOR VINDICATION!
OR WE COULD MAKE OUR STAND HERE. THE ODDS ARE EVEN, STONEY-- WE COULD BEAT THEM.
YOU COULD TRY.

WHY ARE YOU GIVING US THIS CHANCE, STORM? WHY NOT SIMPLY KILL US?
BECAUSE I HAVE NOT FORGOTTEN WHO AND WHAT I AM.
OKAY, WE'LL DO IT YOUR WAY.
INSIDE-- WHERE IT COUNTS, WHERE IT MATTERS-- YOU'RE JUST LIKE US!
NO. TONIGHT, I WAS BETTER!


THE NEXT DAY, IN RUSSELL, NEW YORK...
DIDN'T FIGURE THEY'D GO THROUGH WITH IT.
AN EASY DECISION, CONSIDERING THE ALTERNATIVE.
YOU'D HAVE GONE AFTER THEM, AND FINISHED THE JOB.
YES.
NEW YORK STATE POLICE
I WAS READY TO KILL THEM, AND SHOULD THE NEED ARISE...
...I SHALL BE AGAIN.
WHERE'S THAT LEAVE US THEN, DARLIN'-- AND THE X-MEN?
PART OF OUR CHARTER IS TO DEFEND THE WORLD FROM EVIL MUTANTS. SOMEONE MUST PROTECT THE WEAK, THE INNOCENT, THE HELPLESS--WHETHER THEY BE MUTANT OR NO--
--AND IF NO ONE ELSE DESIRES THE JOB, I SAY IT IS OURS!
BUT I AM TIRED OF DOING SO BY WAITING FOR THOSE VILLAINS TO ALWAYS MAKE THE FIRST MOVE.
IF THE MARAUDERS-- AND FILTH LIKE THEM-- DESIRE WAR, I SAY FURTHER WE BRING IT TO THEIR DOORSTEP, RATHER THAN FOR-EVER FIGHTING ON OUR OWN.
I'M NOT SURE I'M UP TO IT ANYMORE.
I COULD HAVE STOPPED THAT GIRL, SAVED THOSE TWO KIDS.
WE ALL HAVE OUR GHOSTS, MY FRIEND-- OUR SECRET SHAMES, OUR GUILTS.
DO WE LET THEM RULE US, DO WE CRAWL INTO A HOLE AND HIDE UNTIL OUR BODIES FOLLOW OUR SPIRITS INTO OBLIVION?
OR DO WE ACCEPT OUR MISTAKES AND TRY TO LEARN FROM THEM?
WE ARE BOTH DAMAGED GOODS-- THAT IS PART OF WHAT MAKES US... HUMAN.
HAVE YOU CONSIDERED THE RAMIFICATIONS OF ALL THIS?! THESE HUNTERS RATIONALIZED WHAT THEY DID BEHIND THE NOBLEST OF REASONS.
WE'RE ON THAT SAME ROAD, STORM, CRUISIN' ALONG THAT SAME ABYSS. WE GOT LUCKY LAST NIGHT, DON'T COUNT ON IT EVER AGAIN.
IF WE LIVE AN' FIGHT BY THOSE HUNTERS' RULES, HOW DO WE KEEP FROM BECOMING LIKE THEM?
ORORO, YOU TOLD THE COMMANDO, YOU WERE "BETTER"--
--HOW DO WE STAY THAT WAY?!?
YOU ARE NOW LEAVING ADRIONDACK STATE PARK
Please Come Again!
NEXT: FOLLY'S GAMBIT!

MINUTEMEN
Bluntman